

(COPY.)

Rhinefarm, Sonoma,
April 22d, 1906.

My dear Carl:

This is Sunday - the Lord's day of rest! His week's work is ended and he did it well. The doom of San Francisco has been branded with unrelenting, uncompromising ferocity on the face of the darkest history of all mankind. I am so utterly, physically and mentally unstrung that my mind and body refuse to act. The use of the pen is a hardship to me. Giving the last four days and experiencing and seeing what we had to encounter before our hastened flight from the city of hell and devastation, has left its indelible imprints of despair on everybody's vision haunting him to the rest of his days. The earthquake on Wednesday morning at 5.13 itself shrivels up as a casual incident of comparatively little importance, it would have soon have been over-bridged - but its consequences!

Half an hour after the shock a mountain of heavy dense smoke loomed up behind Telegraph Hill from the heart of the City. On Sansome, Third Str. in the Mission and many other locations (also in the Sulphur Works below us) fires broke out simultaneously. Carl and Walter started down town and went to the Warehouse finding no speakable damage by the shock and foreman and crew redeeming the damage. The fire of the Mission and 3d Str. location had grasped the Opera House and devoured the beautiful Aaronson building, working its way towards the Palace, but not Southward. They started out again to the Warehouse - it was then known that the city was without water - found the foreman and his nephew on hand - the crew ran out of the building, when another severe shock at about 9 o'clock made the building shriek and apparently unsafe, and Carl started to pack up the books and papers of the office. Unfortunately a puncheon of Red Wine was shaken from its saddle of the third row right above my desk and the Claret had flooded everything. Schild and my son Rudolph though assisted nobly and they managed to load two teams - the first one was unloaded at Schild's home (Broadway, 3 blocks West of Van Ness), which still stands. The other load went somewhere to the Potrero, where it still remains - under what conditions I am unable to say. In the meantime the fire had run out Mission Street, consumed the Palace Hotel, Spreckel's building, working its way from Sansome Str. through the Wholesale Districts. From out Mission it crossed over to Brannan, then the afternoon Western wind drove it down again to Third Street like a furious wall of fire. Carl had closed the Building and sat with Chris, the foreman, on the opposite housesteps; the western fire wall stood nobly for a time, but the flames from Silver Street soon engulfed the building. The heat became unbearable and Carl found his way home, passing C. Schilling and the Mail Dock, who perhaps an hour later together with St. Mary's Hospital, Sailor's Home and that entire corner were turned into an impenetrable furnace of flames and heat. In the meantime, Walter assisted at Aug. Schilling to check the attacks of the falling cinders with wet sacks and other precautions. He thought the old Kohler & Frohling would protect them. Our building fell at 5 o'clock^{on the first day}. When Carl carried the news to our home my tears flew incessantly and I shall never forget the thunderbolt of wrath smashing the last hope of my life forever. I need not explain to you, dear Carl, why such a business cannot be redeemed by bright hopes for the future. It meant the labor and struggle of two generations and we had just emerged from its many critical confusions and trials apparently victorious and confident of success. Our future was bright for everyone interested. Never held a better assortment of Wines - never a larger stock - good orders - efficient salesman -

very nerve strained in offices and cellar to promote the good work - and now - and now? It means despair.

We went through a night of anxiety on the hill! The heavens stood ablaze behind the hill and the fire slowly crept on northward. It had reached upper California Street, where Hess' residence stood, attacked and gulped up Nob Hill and cleared away the entire side of the hill. They were blowing up buildings continuously, especially the East side of Van Ness, but it climbed over here and there and Claus Spreckel's residence was burnt to a crisp. That evening of the second day we realized the danger of our own situation. The flames swept nearer Montgomery Avenue and still we thought our isolated corner might be spared. We began to pack things in a slipshod way, packed and buried our silverware in the garden, bundled up our wardrobe, carried out books and things, covered them, shovelled soil and grass over it, rushed and frenzied, we heard the fire was checked at Broadway and they were making a fight at the Plaza with Bay-water, but it looked as if it were already desperately near. Heinz and Otto Minz had come and assisted us and packed a few valises to Mill Valley.

We concluded towards Friday evening to leave the house, except Walter and Maury Sims should stay and watch; Carl and Gertrude had come from their home (Union and Van Ness) and presumed from remarks made by the officer of the military squad, that their house had been blown up. (It is doubtful to us whether it stands, because the Paper reports that the fire had been stopped at that corner). So at 10 o'clock in the evening we said our farewell to our old home. Thousand reminiscences flashed up once more before our spiritual vision. I saw the gay throng around our Sylvester table. I once more felt the pleasure and joy emanating within these simple walls and parted with a feeling that I had left a dear and cheerful friend behind. Between families fringing the houses with their bundles of household effects, some camping and lying in the open, the night, warm and balmy, lit up almost to daylight effect, we filed down Dupont Street to the wharf and there we settled down on a lumber-pile near the seawall, watching the fall of our "house of mirth" on the hill above. The familiar lines of the trees and projecting housefronts stood forth in sombre melancholy contrast against the firebound horizon forming the background. Once in a while the flames engulfing another residence sent up a volume of dense smoke. But the North Beachers fought nobly; they had a supply of Bay water and the politician, Abe Ruef, (owning the old Muecke house on Lombard Street) and his friends made a desperate effort to save his house. The fight was still down on Broadway. Chinatown had succumbed during the afternoon. While we waited on the lumber pile Carl and Gertrude told us how they watched the fate of the two houses from Hyde Street and then had joined us to urge withdrawal. We thought from our lumber-pile observatory, we could easily reach the ferry, in front of which was all burnt territory. Boats were taking refugees away at several wharves during the night and we were not apprehensive of being cut off. A continuous stream of all sorts of people and propelling their belongings in all sorts and manner of rigs and vehicles. Order and seriousness prevailed everywhere in the city during the fearful trial and also on this scramble for safety as it passed our vista in a continuous stream to the Ferry, in spite of the sometimes humorous combinations of human groups, the significance of the hour prevailed. Relief-Committee men with badges offered assistance and direction and prevailed upon people to take the steamers to the suburbs. In the

meantime the Tiburon Steamer, "Ukiah" had swung in alongside of us and we ascertained that she was going over at 3 o'clock A.M. After making known our identity the Captain allowed us to go aboard between 12 and 1 ahead of the other passengers. In fact the steamer was ordered by some Manager whose home was burnt in the city to carry him over at 3 o'clock. We heard and felt the desperate struggle behind the hill; Explosions and Dynamite blasts must have taken away many buildings, they followed with tremendous effects in short intervals, but the glare on the horizon stood and the fire raged. When the steamer pulled out the hill stood and our old home gave us its last greeting as if it meant to say: "Don't be afraid, I will not desert you!" We stayed on board the steamer until she went back to the city at 6 o'clock, camping on the floor of the cabin. Fannie, myself, Rudie and Nancy, our Italian girl went on to Sonoma. Carl and Gertrude went back to find out what had happened during the night. They went up to the house, found Walter and Maury and a friend of Walter's rumaging around the house, carrying furniture and things to the edge of the nearby precipice, Ralph returning from Mill Valley and I believe Heini and Hinz were there also to assist. Carl and Gertrude even ventured up Hyde Street Hill and saw their little Eden of bliss still standing. At about one o'clock the Chestnut Street forces withdrew; the fire had worked along Stockton and had cleared the south side of Lombard up to the old "Gray" house, the only residence left on the hill. It then appeared Ruef had won the fight; but when the flames had reached the Raubinger barns and tenement-house the latter turned to what it was formerly called a real "House of Blazes" caught the Schweizer Malt House and a westerly breeze drove it up the hill with furious rapidity, taking the block Lombard-Chestnut by storm. At about 2 o'clock Walter and Maury and the others went through Maury's (the old Eggleston) house down to Francisco Street to make for the Ferry. Also Carl and Gertrude saw the approach of the fullfilment from Hyde Street and rushed wildly with the blinding wind-storm through dust and smoke onward to the ferry. The flames soon followed in their wake; they had swept the hill by this time and now hugged the base to the water-front. Soon the lumber piles, the wharves, the foundries, the flour mill and everything else was wrapped up to Broadway to the very point where the fire had left off before. Thus, at about 3 o'clock the home of your parents and birthplace of your brothers and sisters went out of existence, leaving an enviable record and to everyone of us a dearly beloved sweet remembrance of happy days and glorious hours.

Also Carl Dresel was in great anxiety about his brother, the Doctor; he went down on Friday and had his thrilling experiences in trying to recover the wharf. He (the Doctor) lost all his valuable paraphernalia in the Crocker Building. Maury Sims lost his office outfit on Montgomery Street and we lost - our business! I presume that not a valuable vestige remains of it. I understand that the cellar was filled with wine. The intense heat must have burst every cask.

April 23, 1906 (Papa's Birthday).

How happy and joyful these days passed in far away days in Sonoma and now the children and grandchildren gathered around the old vineyard home to seek shelter and rest from the turmoil of heartrending afflictions. May the spirit of our progenitors sustain us and strengthen our character to perform our duties towards each other with

indulgence and kindness, with love and pity for the sufferings we now see plainly before us.

Maury went to the City yesterday, which can only be entered with Military Passes. He returned in the evening with Heini and brought a few trunks. One of them had been rifled of anything apparently valuable. He describes the hill as a barren waste. A pile of valuable books and papers and other things well covered were destroyed. Some things further away, chairs and tables were undamaged. But he couldn't tell how the matter stood and whether any of my wardrobe and shoes which I stuck in pillow slips are preserved or unlooted. Evidently ghouls gave the place an overhauling and it wouldn't surprise me if the buried silver and other valuables had been ransacked and carried off. So far I have only saved what I carried on my body. It rained heavy last night, which must have spoiled many things in case they had been saved. Maury met Walter and Carl, who were busy doing things; he also went to Ed's house, where he found the Van Geldern's, whose home was also burnt and many other unfortunate sufferers. I guess also Chris, the foreman, was there and Mr. Mundt, all anxious to do something but - where to begin. Ed may possibly assort the papers and books and bring them up here with Carl so posting may be done. Maury went down again with Heini this morning and someone may report further tonight. He says a desperate spirit of energy prevails. He predicts the younger people will build up the City again, if possible better and in some ways superior. They have cleared Market Street from debris and a few old horse-cars are running. The Banks can not let their interests drop, they must back them up, else the loss in Real Estate will wipe them out completely.

I must close this letter. I telegraphed to our agents: "Business total loss, suspend operations"; also to Alfred Stern, if at all possible to come to Sonoma to give me his advice.

The telegram I sent you was kindly taken by Mr. Dannemeyer of the Crown Distilleries to Sacramento. Carl met him Saturday in Sonoma, where he had come from San Rafael to get the train at Verano for Sacramento. He had Dispatches from Lillienthal, Gerstle, Sloss and was anxious to raise \$500 - for them, because none of them had anything worth while in their possession. He came to the farm yesterday on his return to collect the \$15 he had paid for the telegrams because they wouldn't take them C.O.D. I hated to part with the money because I have not a great deal left. There was about \$200 in the safe and Scnild gave me one-half and he kept the other half. But Maury and Carl didn't have anything and Phil Bill wanted \$20 badly, so things are running rather close.

The family keeps up strongly and bears up well under the heavy strain. Fannie and my children try to arouse my vanishing energy and do everything to restore the confidence in my own ability to assist in the restoration of anything like a semblance of order in our affairs. Still my thoughts will not cement sufficiently to brace my broken heart. All I can do - I will try for my children's and for my faithful wife's end for my family's sake. I may and you may find friends to help us. For pity sake let them be generous and do it. I forgot to mention that Ben and Eva are well, but otherwise, I could tell you many frightful experiences of some of our friends. The family sends their love to you - all they are able to give at the present time. Let the tie of mutual responsibility hold us together. Your brother,

CARL.